
A true story about Squaw Valley...

Mountain Feuding !

by Melvin Durslag

For a place committed to stage a Winter Olympic Games just two and a half years from now, Squaw Valley is frighteningly devoid of construction activity.

A large sign along the highway proudly proclaims the place as the site of the 1960 Winter Games, but in the Valley itself, things are so quiet that you could hear a nail drop, if the State should get so lucky.

I made a reconnaissance of Squaw Valley just recently in the company of Mr. Wayne Poulsen, the young landowner there who has been taking the State over a slalom course for upwards of a year.

Mr. Poulsen is not without his grounds in this argument, but then the State isn't, either.

Meanwhile, due to the impasse, and the fact that heavy snows permit working time in the Valley only from May to November, another year is mostly shot, and now the State must cram three years of construction into two years.

Squaw Valley is a magnificent little piece of real estate located in the Sierras, just seven miles from Lake Tahoe.

Elegant mountains bearing great pines and fir-trees surround a verdant, picture-like meadow, and pretty waterfalls spill about the landscape.

As I say, everything about the place is ideal for an Olympics except for the trivial fact there isn't a darned thing there aside from a small lodge, a ski-lift and some nice scenery.

To understand fully this story of mountain intrigue, you must first learn about the landowners.

Squaw Valley property is controlled largely by (a) Poulsen, (b) the U. S. Forestry Service, (c) a realty team of Kuhn and Miller and (d) a group headed by Alexander Cushing, who sold the Valley single-handed to the International Olympic Committee. ("Sold" is exaggerated ! *Editor*).

Cushing has agreed to a deal whereby he will lease his land to the State for 30 days during the Olympics at a price of \$1.

POULSEN REMAINS A HOLDOUT

The Forestry Service has given the State a 30-year lease on its land for \$10, and Kuhn and Miller have also leased for 30 years at a more respectable fee, not disclosed.

Only Poulsen holds out. Without his property, there can be no Olympics in California.

Poulsen is a quiet, sturdy man of 41 who came to Squaw Valley in 1938, shortly after his graduation from the University of Nevada.

He started buying acreage a little at a time, converting every nickel that he had into Squaw Valley property, which he bought cheap.

Poulsen is a pilot for Pan-American. He and his wife, Sandy, have five children. For a while, shortly after the war, they, occupied a tent in Squaw Valley before they were able to build a home.

They have lived for years with a dream, envisioning the Valley as a charming St. Moritz, which they planned some day to develop. They are loaded with blueprints, artist sketches and the like.

Poulsen soon owned 1800 acres, of which he still retains upwards of 1200.

The State needs about 70 of these acres. Its problem is roughly this :

Where the original estimate for staging the Olympics was \$1,000,000, the Olympic Commission has now sworn solemnly to the Legislature that it won't ask for a penny more than \$8,000,000.

To justify this spending and keep the taxpayers from becoming mutinous, it has been decided to turn part of Squaw Valley into a state park after the Olympics, offering both summer and winter recreation to the public.

STARTED TO CONDEMN PROPERTY

Picturing campers, hamburger stands, souvenir hawkers and such on the land where he had planned his dream community, Poulsen has rebelled.

He refuses to sell and can't agree with the State on a lease. So now in desperation, the State has invoked the law of eminent domain and started condemnation proceedings on the Poulsen property that it needs.

Contending, with justice, that he has thrown everything he has into Squaw Valley for almost 20 years, Poulsen claims he is getting a bad shake. And all because of a 12-day snow "carnival." (Oh ! *Ed.*)

But the State, describing Poulsen as unreasonable, offers three counter-arguments, namely :

1. That Poulsen in truth has bitten off a bigger dream than he can manage. "*Without State help, how could he, for example, afford the \$740,000 needed for flood control and sewage alone in Squaw Valley ?*"

2. That Poulsen, despite himself, will become rich off the Olympics which will fatten the value of his property, and

3. That one man's real estate ambitions shouldn't take precedence over the public's general welfare.

As you can see, this is a pretty hot debate. Someone must finish second, and Poulsen, it appears, has been elected.